CONNECTiONS

Connecting through couch co-op: the important role of school libraries for social gaming groups

The team at Next Level Collaboration

Looking back at our childhoods, we often talk about the important role played by gaming and gamer culture in our social and personal development. Long before mainstream online play revolutionised the ways people play together, local couch co-op on a PlayStation 2, or sharing a single keyboard on a 286 computer, provided rich, inherently social experiences. No headsets were required. Yet our social gaming was more than just playing together. We collectively developed an understanding of our shared gaming experiences, discussing strategies to solve complex puzzles, debating in-game character choices and co-imaging hypothetical sequels and expansion packs. Both of us connected with our friends and siblings through the time spent in front of a screen, interacting through and around the virtual worlds designed by people who we would likely never meet.

Now, as a teacher and a speech pathologist working together to change the norms around social capacity building programs, we use cooperative video games to provide the same types of rich social experiences for autistic and other neurodivergent children and young adults. Through gaming, we want our players to not only develop collaborative skills, but also feel valued and connected within their school communities.

What is Next Level Collaboration and why did we start it?
Our professional experiences led us to found Next Level Collaboration, an evidence-informed social program that uses cooperative video games as tools for teaching collaborative skills and building friendships.

As a teacher working in mainstream and specialist schools, Matt identified that many

of his students loved gaming but were also at risk of becoming socially excluded because they didn't conform to expected social norms of neurotypical children and adults. Some of his colleagues saw gaming as a social ill or a problem to be solved, and were concerned by the idea of using this area of strength and interest to re-engage these young learners. Likewise, Jess found that many clinics would rather she use examples drawn from football or basketball than from *Dark Souls* to work with a student with a speech disorder.

The Next Level Collaboration program celebrates the differences of autism and other neurological conditions, and positions multiplayer gaming as a legitimate social space where gamers can bond and build relationships through common interests.

SCiS Schools Catalogue Information Service

ESA wishes to acknowledge the Kulin Nation, Traditional Custodians of the land on which our offices are located, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures and heritage.

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Illustrations of social gaming groups

Image credit: Next Level Collaboration

Why are libraries culturally a good fit for social gaming programs?

People have asked us why we run our Next Level Collaboration sessions out of libraries. A significant reason is the cultural safety they provide. Many of our neurodivergent children and young adults associate the library with a safe and inviting space in which they can be themselves. While some students enjoy kicking the football or shooting hoops at lunchtime, many of our participants prefer quietly reading graphic novels or gaming magazines. Libraries celebrate these activities.

Unfortunately, there are also depressing statistics around the bullying of children with neurological differences, which is an experience shared by many of the people who have joined our gaming groups. Libraries offer a sanctuary where the presence of a librarian can help mitigate the risk of an individual being verbally or physically abused.

What are libraries physically a safe space for social gaming program?

Complementing the welcoming cultural environment, many libraries provide the physical conditions that can support neurodivergent people with sensory differences. For example, many autistic students are sensitive to loud, unexpected sounds and bright lights such as the lighting provided by energy saving globes. Sensory regulation is especially important for some individuals when they are already anxious about social interactions during lunchtime or in after-school clubs. While some schools are now building dedicated low-impact sensory spaces to help these individuals control their sensory environments, libraries have historically served this function in an informal manner for many students. The sensory affordances of a library can help create sensory environments that allow participants in your inclusive gaming club the best chance to regulate their emotional state and focus on collaborating and building friendships.

What are the first steps in setting up a social gaming program?

We argue that co-design with your potential participants is key from the outset. We recommend forming a participant consultative committee to help plan the development of your program. Working with your committee, take the time to learn why they would want to join such a group, which games interest them, and what they would need from any physical space.

As a school-based program, there will of course be boundaries as to what is possible. Although the conversation should be centred on the committee's ideas, you can suggest a few age-appropriate games to provide guidance. We suggest trying to focus conversations on local 'couch co-op' games (as opposed to online games where everyone will need their own device).

Of course you will need to find a space with enough room for your participants – we suggest no more than eight people in the group. You will need enough chairs or beanbags as well as a decent sized screen that allows everyone to view the action. It is important to note that you don't have to buy the latest consoles and games. Many 'retro' titles are very well suited to an inclusive gaming program.

A final word of caution: these programs are ultimately a lifeline for many children and young adults at risk of disengagement from school. As such, don't connect behaviour in other areas of school to the right to be part of the group. Don't use access to this program as a reward, or deny access as a punishment, as building friendships requires regular participation.

Taking your program to the next level

The concept of interest-based programs is not new, and libraries have long been involved in other programs to support neurodivergent children. The value of inclusive communities where difference is celebrated is immense, and for many neurodivergent people gaming is not just an area of passion, but an area of strength. By focusing on their interest, we can provide opportunities for neurodivergent children and young adults to develop social connection and build friendships based on a shared love of games. Everyone wants to feel like they belong, and social gaming programs help create a sense of community between participants by celebrating gamer culture and identity. If you are interested in learning more about how to implement social gaming groups, see Matt's book, *Using video games to level up collaboration for students: a fun, practical way to support social-emotional skills development*.

Jess Rowlings
Co-founder and CEO
Next Level Collaboration

Dr Matthew Harrison
Senior lecturer and researcher in Autism inclusion at Melbourne University and Co-founder at Next Level Collaboration

Jess Rowlings is a speech and language pathologist and the co-founder and CEO of Next Level Collaboration. Jess has a lived experience of neurodivergence and was diagnosed with autism and ADHD as an adult. She is passionate about the use of strengths-based approaches to promote social capacity and inclusion. Jess specialises in the design and analysis of video game-based intervention to build social capacity in neurodiverse children. She developed and ran a dedicated Minecraft server to support neurodivergent girls and women. Jess works as a researcher at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, and previously Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

Dr Matthew Harrison has a passion for utilising technology to enhance social capacity building, belonging and inclusion in education. He has taught in Australia, South Korea and the UK at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Matthew is currently coordinating Autism Intervention within the Master of Learning Intervention, and is the Co-Director of Student Experience at the University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education. His research focuses primarily on neurodiversity, inclusive education and the effective use of digital technologies as teaching and learning tools.

SCIS is more

Welcome to the Term 4, 2022 issue of *Connections*.

For my 10-year-old daughter who reads, or perhaps more aptly devours, books at a frenetic rate, the school library performs a vital role in satisfying her broad appetite for written content. More importantly, the school library plays an essential role in supporting the broader school community and promoting better educational outcomes for students. 'The goal of all school libraries is to develop information literate students who are responsible and ethical participants in society.' (IFLA School Library Guideline, 2nd ed.) These are the drivers that drew me to the role of Product Manager with SCIS.

I started this new role in the depths of a Melbourne winter during the latest COVID spike, working in a hybrid environment after more than four years of working remotely – and in a different library sector. This may appear difficult, but to me it is a wonderful challenge which I'm embracing. School libraries have a special place in my heart, albeit a distant one, from when I attended school. They have always been places to discover and learn, to share a love of books with friends, but importantly they can just be a safe and quiet space for kids.

For the past five years I worked with public libraries supporting the delivery of better outcomes for their communities. Public libraries face many challenges including budget stress, resourcing issues associated with both the pandemic and skills shortages, and changing delivery models. I'm sure these all sound very familiar to school library staff who face these same challenges and more.

My work with public libraries focused on data analytics, streamlining workflows and providing evidence-based collection management tools to help libraries make informed decisions. The idea behind this is to help libraries save time and money, while delivering efficiencies. The need for greater efficiency has never been more evident for public libraries, with increased budgetary pressures, resource shortages and the 'great resignation' seeing library staff not only moving to other library roles but also leaving the library industry to pursue different careers.

These same challenges have been a constant for school libraries, in many cases

Anthony at the School Library Association of Victoria Symposium in September 2022.

for years. The struggles for school libraries seem to be ongoing and the opportunities to deliver greater efficiency through process improvements are limited. For example, without trained library professionals in school libraries, who holds the knowledge and skills to implement new workflows that drive efficiencies?

SCIS Data, which fully integrates via a school's library management system (LMS), is a simple way to drive efficiencies, ensuring that items in the school's catalogue are easily discoverable by the school community. Imagine being able to download high-quality catalogue records and authority files into your LMS with the click of a mouse! You don't need to imagine this, it's exactly what SCIS Data provides for schools with a subscription.

Manually creating quality catalogue records for print books, ebooks, audio books, websites, apps and digital videos is a challenge for well-resourced libraries and removes staff from their student-facing tasks. For under-resourced libraries, who are navigating the internet in order find information across the growing number of formats, manually creating catalogue records takes time that staff don't have and takes them away from core tasks.

To quote from one of my favourite children's books, *Where the wild things are*,

why would library staff search 'through night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year' for accurate, quality data to create catalogue records? Quality consistent catalogue records can be downloaded from SCIS Data, day or night, any day of the week throughout the year, freeing up staff for a 'wild rumpus' (with apologies to Maurice Sendak).

I'm excited to be working with school libraries. I hope that our efforts continue to support the delivery of efficiencies and free up time for library staff to focus on great outcomes for their school communities.

Anthony Shaw
SCIS Product Manager

Anthony Shaw has had more than 25 years' experience within the book industry across a wide range of roles; working in bookselling, buying, publishing and supporting libraries. In his most recent role before joining SCIS he was working with collectionHQ as Sales and Account Manager, helping public libraries deliver better collections for their communities across Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong. He lives in Melbourne with his wife, 10-year-old daughter and slightly crazy 2-year-old border collie Rudy.

WEBSITE + APP REVIEWS

ACMI: SCHOOLS & TEACHERS
https://www.acmi.net.au/education/
ACMI (formerly The Australian Centre for Moving Images) offers teachers and students access to onsite films, workshops, exhibitions and talks. It also features online programs and resources aligned to the Australian Curriculum.
SCIS no: 1135827

BE YOU
https://beyou.edu.au
Be You is a mental health in education initiative delivered by Beyond Blue, Early Childhood Australia and Headspace. Resources are available for preschool to year 12 teachers to help develop mental health and wellbeing programs for their students.
SCIS no: 5415867

BRINGING THEM HOME
https://bth.humanrights.gov.au
The *Bringing them home report,* and its significance, is the focus of this website. Content includes: the history of the Stolen Generations; the report; testimonies from members of the Stolen Generations; curriculum links to teaching resources; and additional relevant material, including support for healing.
SCIS no: 5415879

CRAWFORD FUND
https://www.crawfordfund.org
The Crawford Fund is a not-for-profit organisation 'highlighting the benefits to Australia and developing countries of research for agriculture and development'. Available teaching resources focus on international research, training, and global food and nutrition security. Resources are linked to the Australian Curriculum priorities of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability.
SCIS no: 5415900

CSIRO EDUCATIONAL DATASETS
https://www.csiro.au/en/education/Resources/Educational-datasets
The datasets on this website were developed to facilitate simpler use of real-world data in classrooms. Teachers will find data aligned to the Australian Curriculum for primary and secondary students, and a guide to using data in the classroom.
SCIS no: 5415921

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY: ANCIENT HISTORY RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS
https://www.mq.edu.au/faculty-of-arts/departments-and-schools/department-of-history-and-archaeology/engage-with-us/resources-for-schools
This authoritative collection comprises resources for: ancient Rome, Egypt, Greece, and Israel; Pompeii and Herculaneum; and ancient Australia. Links guide users to source materials, articles, websites, international research projects, video clips and teaching materials.
SCIS no: 5415941

MATH CLOCK, BY MLC
https://apps.apple.com/au/app/math-clock-by-mlc/id1444666967?ls=1
The aim of this app is to help students become conversant with clocks and time. By using analogue clocks, students will be learning how to tell the time, solve problems using time intervals, compare digital time, and use the drawing tool to annotate work.
SCIS no: 5416331

MONTESSORI PRE-SCHOOL, KIDS 3–7
https://apps.apple.com/au/app/montessori-preschool-kids-3-7/id1138436619
Preschool and early years students can undertake a variety of app-based activities inspired by Montessori's learn-by-doing pedagogy. Activities focus on music, nursery rhymes, shapes, number recognition and rudimentary coding skills.
SCIS no: 5416346

ROADSET
https://www.roadset.com.au
Created for Year 9 students, this road safety education program can be integrated into aspects of Health and PE in the Australian Curriculum. It features ten interactive learning modules assisting students to develop road safety awareness skills.
SCIS no: 5416374

THE SEA WE BREATHE
https://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/the-sea-we-breathe/
This engaging UK website features material pertaining to overfishing, ocean health and climate change. Educational resources are available for both primary and secondary students. These include links to: sustainable fishing; blue carbon habitats; marine protected areas; and digital downloads.
SCIS no: 5416388

SYDNEY LIVING MUSEUMS: LEARNING
https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/learning
Sydney Living Museums comprises twelve significant Sydney sites including historical buildings, a farm, and museums. The website contains details of curriculum-linked excursions and resources for stages 1–6. Students in stages 1–4, unable to visit, are catered for with interactive virtual excursions and online resources.
SCIS no: 1987836

Nigel Paull
Teacher Librarian
North Coast, NSW

The websites and apps selected for review are often of a professional nature and should be initially viewed by teachers and library staff to determine suitability for students. The links and content of these sites are subject to change.

METADATA TO ENHANCE DIVERSITY, CONNECTION AND BELONGING

Catherine Barnes on how you can use the 'language students use' in your catalogue records to help diverse student groups feel thoughtfully represented in your library.

School libraries are dynamic, innovative and exciting places, but they are also a place for diversity, connection and belonging. Ben Chadwick (2020) explains: 'Some things are fundamental to providing a library service. Of course, you need a decent collection of resources, but you also need to support students to discover it, explore it and use it to meet their interests and research needs.' At the core of this statement is our role in helping students discover, explore and use resources that meet their diverse needs using the metadata in our library catalogues. This enables them to make connections and gives them a sense of belonging in our space and their learning.

Developing this sense of belonging begins with providing a collection that meets the needs of your community. Kay Oddone (2019) stated: 'Qualified teacher librarians are best placed to, and indeed, should be, making changes as they are guided by their professional expertise and experience; their knowledge of their school community and context; [and] their library policies.' This applies to collection development and, perhaps even more, to collection management, discovery and representation. When we download bibliographic records, we are in the best position to enhance the imported metadata to meet the needs of our school community.

One of the most powerful ways we can represent and support culture, faith, language, and gender in our communities is by providing diverse resources. However, we need to ensure we represent these groups through our cataloguing in a manner that avoids labelling and stereotypes. All our students and staff need a sense of belonging in not only the physical space of our library but also in our catalogue.

An example of this is accurate representation of cultures. Often a student is not represented by their country of birth but rather by their culture. For example, some of our students who were born in Cambodia direct us to use 'Khmer' rather than 'Cambodian'. However, we have several students from Syria who prefer to be recognised by their ethnoreligious group, Druze. These terms are not downloaded with a SCIS record, but we can add tags and notes that allow students to see themselves represented and celebrated. Using this language not only encourages belonging, but is an acknowledgement that culture is more than place of birth.

We are a Lutheran school, with many religions represented in our student population. Respect and acknowledgement need to be represented in our catalogue. The Druze religion is not a heading in SCIS, but does appear as a Library of Congress Subject Heading in most library systems and can be easily added as a local heading. When you add your own heading, you are representing your own community needs and providing a sense of belonging for your users.

Students reading in Catherine Barnes' library

In recent years, the greatest change in representation of diversity in our schools has been in the area of gender and sexuality. Whilst it is difficult to keep abreast of the LGBTQIA+ acronym, our students are more informed than ever. Fortunately, SCIS has several SEE References, allowing us to use consistent subject headings when a book has a topic related to LGBTQIA+. But just because a novel has a character who identifies with this group doesn't make it the **subject** of the book and by doing so we risk creating an otherness about their identity. It is important to make available resources that represent diverse groups without explicitly labelling them as 'other'. For this reason, we add tags in our library catalogue, using the language of the students, so they can find resources with characters and situations they can relate to or are motivated to learn about. My key advice here is to be guided by your community, both in language use and representation.

Our descriptions also include our borrower records, which have a field for gender. Recently, I started to wonder why. The field comes directly from our student management system import, and would allow us to run borrowing statistics on the difference between genders. But our system only has two genders and gender can be fluid. I decided to not include this field in our import, and unsurprisingly our borrower records are still relevant.

One small act led to another. When I was processing student memberships for our local public library, I saw that the form had a section for gender. In discussion with the Library Coordinator, we determined that stating gender was not required. In fact, its omission would be beneficial as they don't have a

personal relationship with the students, with greater margin for misunderstanding. This one change can benefit many current and potential users.

An ongoing example of changing vocabulary is in reference to First Nations Australians, as shown by the changes in the Australian Curriculum and the resources we receive in our libraries. SCIS has many *Used For* links in their Authority Files and numerous *Narrower* terms. However, representation of these resources in our own library must be guided by our community. One of the key tenets is 'Nothing about us, without us'. Some communities prefer to be referred to as their Language group, others by a term that encompasses many or all groups or nations. It is important when 'labelling' a resource that you use the vocabulary approved, used and accepted by your community. To do this you must simply, ask!

The most important consideration when downloading and creating records for your library is assessing it for your context. Ask yourself:

- How will it be used?
- Why will it be used?
- When will it be used?
- Who will use it?

SCIS records are designed with these aspects in mind, and may just require a little tinkering for your context. However, when downloading vendor records, such as from an ebook collection or database, you may need to make them discoverable, accessible and explorable, using Australian Curriculum language, local vocabulary and tags that represent your community. It's always pertinent to consider first if the resource will be an enduring, key item in your collection. This will ensure your time is well spent.

There is nothing more powerful than seeing yourself represented in your community, and school libraries can play a leading role here. Creating records where students can find themselves, their friends and their community represented is worth the time and effort involved.

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Catherine Barnes
Information Management Lecturer/School Library Manager
Adelaide, South Australia

DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE: MORE THAN JUST THE END OF THE WORLD TO TEENS

Jessica Finden explores how dystopian literature might be helpful in encouraging teens to explore and come to terms with their fears about the future.

It's not the end of the world …

Can you remember what it was like to be a teenager? The constant worry – about your identity, whether or not you fit in with your friends, your family, and your overall place in the world. The catch phrase, 'it's not the end of the world' is regularly bandied about when referring to teenage angst. Dystopian fiction is often known as a genre which focuses primarily on 'the end of the world' and as such, is a popular genre amongst teenagers. But despite its gloomy subject matter, high school students benefit from reading dystopian texts as this genre provides them the opportunity to face their fears about the future, while offering hope for what is to come. This is why fiction, and particularly dystopian fiction, must be a part of any school library; it provides more than just 'end of world' scenarios for students.

Image credit: iStock/Wachiwet

Why is it popular?

The appeal of dystopian fiction stems from its ability to target a broad audience – both male and female, teenager and adult (Gander, 2012). Dystopian fiction provides readers with characters who face challenges that reflect real-world events and who can still make a difference despite these obstacles. This is evident in Neal and Jarrod Shusterman's novel *Dry*, a story that touches on the very real concern of what happens when water runs out. *Dry* shows its secondary school readers that while there are indeed deadly repercussions of this scenario, humans are resourceful and there is usually help on the way.

According to Scoles & Ostenson (2013) dystopian literature aligns with adolescent development, as it provides a platform for them to delve on societal and moral issues at a point in an adolescent's life when they are able to understand bigger and more complex concerns. Campbell (2014) supports Scholes & Ostenson's observation, noting that the teenage years are a time of great upheaval and dystopian fiction provides an outlet for the uncertainty that surrounds growing up and living in a world that appears to be on the precipice of an apocalypse. *Hive* by Australian author A.J. Betts is set in a world that initially seems very different to our own. *Hive* allows secondary school readers to stretch their understanding of what might happen in the future. It provides a safe space to consider how people might respond to the uncertainty of humanity's survival.

2020 and 2021 have showcased just how real dystopian literature can be. COVID-19 has shown the world that we are not as removed from pandemics, oppression and control as we once originally thought. This is another reason why dystopian fiction is so popular with teenagers, it allows them to play the 'what if' game and see the devastation through to the end. *The road to winter* by Mark Smith and *Where the world turns wild* by Nicola Penfold are both dystopian texts that touch on the idea of a virus taking over the world. Each offers a unique perspective on how it might play out, Penfold's written for early secondary readers and Smith's for secondary students. These texts, while obviously set in the future, have uncanny links to our current pandemic. Ultimately, topical narratives are the ones that tend to be the most popular.

Value to the collection

Reynolds (2007) argues that teenagers need more from texts than just a warning of the risks and problems created by previous generations, stating that they need 'new kinds of texts and new approaches to problem solving' (p.154). Dystopian fiction allows readers to consider the possibility of the end of the world and in doing so, it challenges its readers to see beyond the here and now and predict what their future may look like. Crocetti & Barr's (2020) research discusses the need to integrate science-based concepts within other disciplines, such as English and History. While they are suggesting that science-inspired picture books and graphic novels be used across the disciplines, it is evident that the same argument can be applied to the value of using novels with science-based issues within the Science curriculum.

The issues and themes raised within the dystopian genre are varied and topical. They are issues which speak to the concerns of their readership and provide glimmers of hope for a seemingly dire future. Teenagers are aware of the failings of previous generations; Greta Thunberg is a perfect example of a teen speaking out and holding the people in power accountable for their choices. Climate change, the increase of natural disasters, pandemics, water scarcity, and pollution are all issues raised within dystopian texts and are current-day fears. Short (2018) writes about the trends in children's literature and says that diversity within literature has a strong focus within reading communities but can often by problematic to find (pp. 292-293). Recent dystopian texts such as *The interrogation of Ashala Wolf*

by Ambelin Kwaymullina help to fill the diversity divide by providing a story offering a unique combination of Indigenous legends and connections to nature (Hodge, 2020), while using the popular dystopian genre to do so.

Using literature beyond the English classroom has its benefits; it provides students with multiple opportunities to read and allows them to access texts that may not be standard for English teachers. Garrow (2012, p.41) highlights that well-known literature is an effective means of reaching reluctant or struggling readers. Popular literature goes beyond just helping reluctant readers within an English classroom, it also provides all levels of readers with the opportunity to make links between a fictional text and what is happening in the real world. It can provide them with a foundation of interest which allows the Science or Geography teacher to link back to. 'Thus, teachers can use dystopian literature to generate student interest in relevant classroom topics, by relating it back to popular fiction.'

> **"** Students within the early secondary school age group are continuing to seek out their identity and dystopian literature allows them to access diverse characters in challenging settings and situations. **"**

Role of the teacher librarian

Students within the early secondary school age group are continuing to seek out their identity (Travers & Travers, 2008, p.12) and dystopian literature allows them to access diverse characters in challenging settings and situations. Teacher librarians may draw on their knowledge of current, popular texts to guide teachers towards texts that not only support the curriculum but allow students to continue to expand their empathy and understanding of real-world or potential real-world areas of concern. If teacher librarians can support staff by providing them with engaging and topical literature suggestions, students who baulk at the reading part of their English subject may find reading pleasurable if the context has changed.

A teacher librarian can support a Science or Humanities teacher by developing a list of literature that links to the curriculum. They could supply the department with a short summary of the main themes or issues within the text and develop activities with the teacher to support the use of the text. By supporting different departments, a teacher librarian will be able to broaden their reach as students who may not frequent the library have a new opportunity to engage with the space and resources. If the school has the aim of building on or expanding its reading culture, one of the best ways to do so is to engage

staff (Buchan, 2020) and this is made easier by showing staff the benefits of using literature within their learning and teaching frameworks.

Bringing about change

Setting the wheels in motion for the use of dystopian fiction beyond the English department is no easy feat. The challenge will lie in convincing department heads that the integration of literature within their units of work is beneficial. But with the support of the teacher librarian, this expansion of literature into other subjects will provide the opportunity for students to engage with texts in a more meaningful way, which ultimately is what we strive for.

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Jessica Finden
Teacher Librarian
Carmel College

Having worked as an English and History teacher for 10 years, and the past 4 years as a teacher librarian, Jessica is passionate about finding ways to link literature and curriculum in a meaningful way. She is currently completing a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship).

THE INFORMATION FLUENCY FRAMEWORK

New South Wales has recently introduced a new framework to support information literacy. SCIS speaks to Department of Education Library Coordinator Carmel Grimmett about how this framework may prove useful for library staff across the country.

The Information Fluency Framework (IFF) is a new tool for teacher librarians in primary and secondary settings. The IFF is the primary source of information outcomes and processes for teacher librarians in the NSW Department of Education to use together with *Information skills in the school* as a support document to the library policy.

What is the Information Fluency Framework?

Information fluency is the ability to critically think while engaging with, creating and utilising information and technology, regardless of the information platform or medium. (IFF p. 4)

The IFF was formulated in response to an identified need to support students to develop skills required for global citizenship. The Framework was developed collaboratively between 2018 and 2021 by a large group of teacher librarians working in the NSW Department of Education.

The skills in the IFF are (mainly) found in the general capabilities, which are now incorporated into every learning area syllabus. The Information Fluency Framework provides a structure for teacher librarians and teachers to use so they can work collaboratively to develop these skills in students. (IFF p. 5)

Structure

The IFF is a series of statements arranged along a progression from Early Stage 1 to Stage 6. It is divided into five elements:

Social, Literate, Innovative, Critical, Ethical.

These are referred to by the acronym **'SLICE'**.

These elements encourage teacher librarians to develop learning tasks from a range of viewpoints and explore them with their students.

Each of the elements is divided into strands which position students as consumers or creators of information.
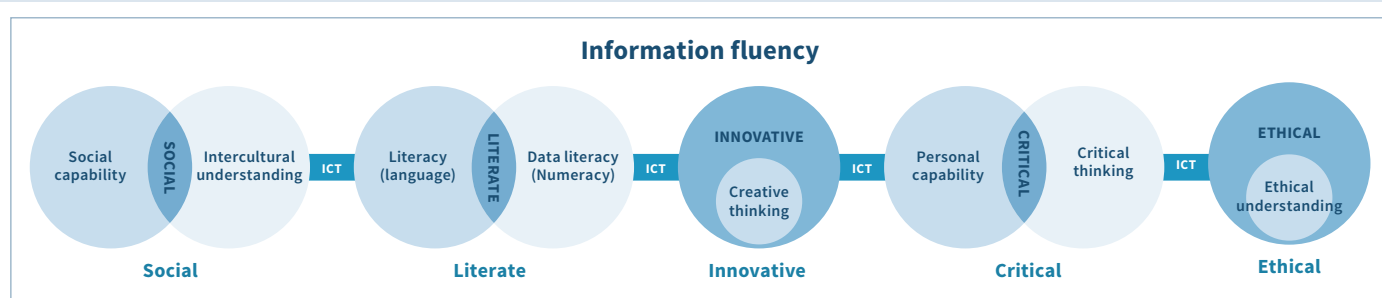
Uses of the Information Fluency Framework

I was one of a small group of primary and secondary teacher librarians who participated in an IFF pilot project in Term 2, 2021. My positive experience prompted me to seek out the voices of others who participated in the pilot project. The results were published in the online education journal *Scan*.

While there is no prescribed way to approach the IFF, there are many valid ways to use this flexible tool to support library programs. As a publicly available document, the IFF is free for all teacher librarians to use regardless of their educational setting. Here are some suggested ways to begin using the IFF:

- Try exploring the IFF through a Stage checklist (see next page). The Stage checklists are available as an appendix to the IFF.

- If you like starting from scratch, try the elements as a guide to the process. If you start with the Social element you can model best practice by considering the interests of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as you commence your planning.

- If you have an existing unit which you would like to review, you can do so by using the Stage checklists to audit your document, ticking off outcomes to gauge whether there are elements missing from your program. If the unit includes assessment tasks, start by matching those to IFF outcomes and work out into other areas of the unit.

- If you are compiling a LearnPath or LibGuide, the IFF can guide your selection of resources for inclusion in the guides and highlight areas where those perspectives are missing.

- Here's a challenge – find a text for which you need to write some learning resources. Examine the text for themes or sections that align with the five elements of the IFF. Use the IFF outcomes for inspiration and focus as you design the learning resources.

- Using picture books with sophisticated themes is a powerful teaching practice to engage older students. There are loads of great curriculum-linked teaching resources based on picture books available as Shared Practice and Resource Kits (SPaRKs) on the Scan website. You can find them here: https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/scan/past-issues/sparks. Perhaps these resources will SPaRK your imagination!

A chart showing the interconnected capabilities needed to develop the the skills for information fluency. Alt text for chart available on our website.

Social Learning Progression

The IFF outcomes are aligned with sub-elements, which fit within each strand. This shows the Social element for the students as consumers strand:

Learning stage	K	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
As consumers, students:							
1. **Appreciate and resolve diverse perspectives**	IFFKS.1.1 express their opinions and listen to the opinions of others in given situations	IFF1S.1.1 identify the perspectives of others	IFF2S.1.1 identify and describe shared perspectives within and across various cultural groups	IFF3S.1.1 describe various perspectives on an issue	IFF4S.1.1 explain perspectives that differ, to expand their understanding of an issue	IFF5S.1.1 present diverse perspectives and the assumptions on which they are based	IFF6S.1.1 present a balanced view on issues where conflicting views cannot be easily resolved
2. **Understand how information is affected by cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices**	IFFKS.1.2 identify other cultures in their learning group to see how this affects information use	IFF1S.1.2 identify and explore culturally diverse activities and languages	IFF2S.1.2 describe and compare the way their own and other cultures live and communicate with people in other places or times	IFF3S.1.2 describe and compare a range of cultural stories, events, artefacts and communication methods	IFF4S.1.2 describe and compare the knowledge, beliefs and practices of various cultural groups	IFF5S.1.2 identify factors that contribute to understanding in intercultural communication and discuss some strategies to avoid misunderstanding	IFF6S.1.2 analyse the complex nature of information, knowledge, beliefs and practices to understand and enhance communication
3. **Empathise across cultures**	IFFKS.1.3 show an awareness of the feelings, needs and interests of others	IFF1S.1.3 imagine and describe their own feelings if they were put in someone else's place	IFF2S.1.3 imagine and describe the feelings of others in a range of unfamiliar contexts	IFF3S.1.3 describe the situations of others in local, national and global contexts	IFF4S.1.2 describe the feelings of others in situations across local, national and global contexts	IFF5S.1.3 describe the feelings and motivations of people in different situations	IFF6S.1.3 recognise the effect that empathising with others has on their own feelings, motivations and actions

Stage 3 checklist

Checklists for each stage are found in the appendix to the IFF. This is the Stage 3 checklist.

S	L	I	C	E
Social	**Literate**	**Innovative**	**Critical**	**Ethical**
IFF3S.1.1 describe various perspectives on an issue	IFF3L.1.1 independently locate and access information or literary texts and viewpoints	IFF3I.1.1 pose questions to expand and interpret information	IFF3C.1.1 discuss emotions and thoughts in response to different information sources	IFF3E.1.1 explain what constitutes an ethical decision and how it might be reached
IFF3S.1.2 describe and compare a range of cultural stories, events, artefacts and communication methods	IFF3L.1.2 interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing texts on similar topics or themes, including multimedia texts	IFF3S.1.2 expand on known ideas to create new ideas or understandings	IFF3C.1.2 use evidence to choose a course of action or reach a conclusion	IFF3E.1.2 discuss the consequence of different actions in relation to information use
IFF3S.1.3 describe the situations of others in local, national and global contexts	IFF3L.1.3 compare and contrast information between texts		IFF3C.1.3 identify and clarify relevant information and opinions and prioritise ideas	
IFF3S.2.1 cooperatively develop information / knowledge using group expertise	IFF3L.2.1 compose texts for a range of purposes by selecting and discarding ideas to make texts suitable for familiar audiences and purposes	IFF3I.2.1 create and refine ideas and possibilities, suggesting alternative solutions	IFF3C.2.1 construct and demonstrate an idea	IFF3E.2.1 identify what constitutes an ethical decision and how it might be reached when creating information
IFF3S.2.2 discuss the value of diverse perspectives and describe a point of view that is different to their own	IFF3L.2.2 plan and deliver presentations, incorporating learned content and appropriate visual and multimodal elements	IFF3I.2.2 assess and test options to pout ideas into action	IFF3C.2.2 use cause-effect statements to explain a claim, conclusion or outcome	IFF3E.2.2 identify the consequences of ethical decision-making in relation to information creation
IFF3S.2.3 identify a community need or problem and consider ways to act to address it	IFF3L.2.3 make judgements about how well communicated information was understood		IFF3C.2.3 apply knowledge gained from one context to another unrelated context	IFF3E.2.3 apply rights and responsibilities when creating information

Opportunities to collaborate

The IFF represents an opportunity to build on the work of a collaborative group of teacher librarians. I encourage you to seek out a colleague and collaborate as you explore the IFF. Let the Framework guide you to trial new teaching strategies so your students meet IFF outcomes. Perhaps using the Framework will bring a new focus to your programming.

References

Grimmett, C. (2021). Trialling the Information Fluency Framework: A report from the pilot schools. *Scan, 40*(9).

NSW Department of Education (2021). Information Fluency Framework.

Carmel Grimmett
Library Coordinator
New South Wales Department of Education

Carmel Grimmett is Library Coordinator with the NSW Department of Education. For twenty years, Carmel was teacher librarian at a large primary school in the inner west of Sydney. Before becoming a teacher, she worked as a children's librarian in the public library system. Carmel has previously served on the committee of her local teacher librarian network, and has acted as a mentor for newly graduated teacher librarians in NSW public schools. In 2021, Carmel participated in the Information Fluency Framework pilot program, writing a *Scan* article on the experiences of participants.

ELR INTERVIEW WITH KIM BRUNORO

SCIS speaks to Kim Brunoro about the importance of the Educational Lending Right School Library Survey, which is running in Term 4.

Kim Brunoro is the Director of Literature and Contemporary Music in the Creative Industries Branch, part of the Australian Government's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. Kim discusses the Educational Lending Right (ELR) School Library Survey, as well as the Lending Right Schemes in general.

1. Before we go any further, are there books that you recall from your school days with affection or admiration? Can you remember any favourites?

I have been a prolific reader since I can remember, often in trouble from my parents for staying up into the early hours of the morning or reading all weekend instead of 'getting out of the house'. This means that there are almost too many books blurring together for me to choose a favourite. However, several classics stand out, such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *Lord of the Rings* (neither of which I can get my kids to read). I will take this opportunity to let you know my favourite book of the month, Hannah Kent's *Devotion*, which I consumed while in bed with COVID-19.
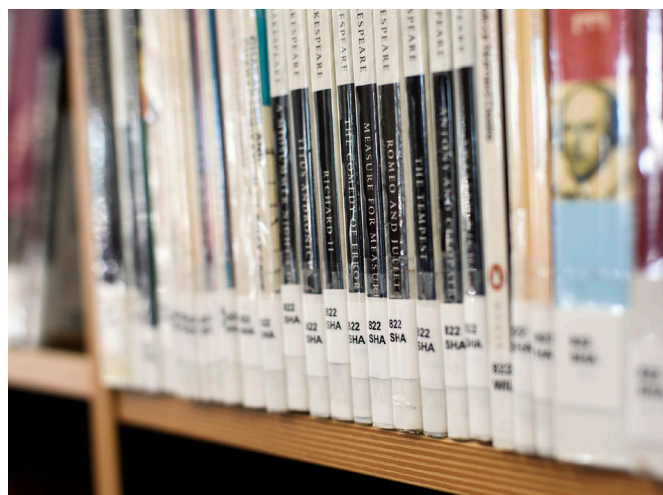
2. The ELR School Library Survey provides up-to-date library data that ensures Australian creators and publishers can receive compensation for the free use of their books in school libraries. Why is it important for school library staff to participate in ELR if they're invited?

School library staff are in an important position to be able to provide data on their library's book collection in the annual surveys. School libraries are selected to participate in the annual surveys to be a representative sample. As a result, the annual payments for creators and publishers paid by the Educational Lending Right (ELR) scheme and Public Lending Right (PLR) schemes are reflective of national library collections. If your library chooses not to participate in the ELR survey when selected, another library will be chosen. It is important that the survey includes a good representation across states and territories, size of school, urban and regional – so that a statistical weighting can be applied to estimate the number of copies nationally.

School librarians and staff that have previously participated in the ELR scheme survey tell us that it does not take long. In some cases, the school simply provides permission and the data is extracted via the library software vendor. In others, the participating school runs a process on their catalogue system and returns the data to Education Services Australia (ESA). This does not take long and assistance is available from ESA.

3. Why do we have ELR surveys?

One of the objectives of the ELR and PLR schemes is to recompense Australian creators and publishers in recognition of income lost through free multiple use of their books in public and educational lending libraries. The second objective of the schemes is to support the enrichment of Australian culture by encouraging the growth and development of Australian writing.

The annual payment a creator or publisher receives is calculated from the estimated number of copies of their books **held** in Australian lending libraries. A minimum of 50 copies must be held in educational or public lending libraries to trigger payment. Books are surveyed annually for two consecutive financial years following their publication. If in the second year there are less than 50 copies of a book in public and/or educational lending libraries, it will not be surveyed in future years unless a new edition is released.

> " In 2021–22, approximately $23 million was paid to over 12,000 creators and publishers. "

In 2021–22, approximately $23 million was paid to over 12,000 creators and publishers. Feedback to the Australian Government suggests that the ELR and PLR annual payments are highly valued and an important part of the income received from writing. It is hoped that if authors have reliable income from their writing it will assist them to keep writing.

4. Does ELR only survey schools? Do preschools, universities and registered training organisations contribute?

The ELR survey includes a representative sample of primary and

high schools (including kindergarten to year 12 schools), TAFES and universities. The survey also includes public and independent schools.

5. The Public Lending Right (PLR) survey counts books that are kept in 'classified libraries'. What sorts of libraries are these?

The term 'classified libraries' refers to most lending libraries in Australia. It is defined in the legislation for the Scheme as 'public lending libraries other than the National Library of Australia and a reference library established by the government of a state or territory'.

The Scheme's legislative framework is the *Public Lending Right Act 1985*, the Public Lending Right Scheme 2016 and the Educational Lending Right Policies and Procedures 2011.

6. Apart from authors and publishers, who is eligible for compensation under the Lending Right program?

Australian book creators may be eligible, if they have contributed significantly to the content of the work. In most cases this means that an Australian illustrator (or photographer), translator, compiler or editor of a book can claim lending rights in addition to an author.

7. Might ELR pose a risk to schools' privacy protocols? For example, does the survey record students' names?

No. The survey only collects the titles and numbers of books **held** in an educational library. It is not based on borrowings and no information relating to library users or borrowers is collected.

8. We know that the Australian Government is responsible for ELR. Is it possible to get an indication of other programs that the Office manages?

The Australian Government delivers a broad range of programs that encourage excellence in the arts, help to protect our cultural heritage, and support public access to and participation in arts and culture in Australia.

This covers programs to assist games and screen production, and to protect and celebrate Indigenous arts and languages. The Government provides support to the major performing arts companies for sustainable cultural development in regional and remote communities, and support to visual artists and musicians. It also safeguards, protects and provides funding support to the National Collecting Institutions (National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, Australian National Maritime Museum, National Film and Film Sound Archive, National Portrait Gallery of Australia).

Daniel Hughes
Project Manager, Educational Lending Right
Education Services Australia

SCHOOL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT: THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL IN MELBOURNE

SCIS speaks to teacher librarian Stephanie Ward about her school library in Melbourne's inner North, which has recently been refurbished.

1. What is your role and what does your job entail?

My job is Head of Library and Research, so most of my work is library management and overseeing the events, programs, services and work of the team. We're really lucky at Uni High, we've got a staff of five; two library technicians and three teacher librarians. We're not all full time, but it's nice to have that team to work with and really bounce ideas off one another as it creates a sense of community and growing something and setting goals together which I can appreciate that not all libraries get the opportunity to have.

My role can be more administrative than some of the other teacher librarians on my team. I'm responsible for the budget and ultimately do most of the purchasing but we talk about acquisitions together. I attend a lot of the structured meetings with the school leadership and teaching teams, so my role is around liaising with teacher teams, heads of learning areas and school leadership to advocate for the library, resources the curriculum, and sort of try and stir up encouragement and enthusiasm for working with library staff, running workshops supporting research skills across the curriculum.

2. What would you say is the most rewarding aspect of our work and why?

I taught English for about six years prior to becoming a teacher librarian and the thing that really drew me to the library was that opportunity to see what was going on across the school. So being much more connected to the school as a community, what's happening in all the different learning areas, getting to witness and participating in the diversity of programs that the school has on offer, all of the activities and events, and what's going on in the curriculum across the school.

I like that my job is a lot about having that sort of central, safe, welcoming, supportive space for staff and students, and the role that we have in building a community and responding to the interests and needs of that community. I like that it's always changing, it's always evolving, it keeps you on your toes and no day is ever the same.

3. What do you see as the most important part of the library's role in the school community?

Providing a space that is safe, supportive, and a community space. It's for students to pursue their passions and it responds to their needs. But it's also a space for growth and development and something of a haven. I think that's really important, to have a space like that in a school.

Beyond the space itself, the culture that the library contributes to – it's really a beacon in the school for the school's culture and really models the things that we value as a school. Things like celebrating diversity, being inclusive, encouraging creativity and wonder, I think all of those are things the library is in a really good position to

Students working at new study booths in the University High School Library

From top left; study booths, collaborative spaces and the circulation desk at the University High School Library

be able to foster and model for the school community.

The school library is also integral to teaching, learning, resourcing the curriculum and working with teachers to facilitate access to resources, which is so important, especially given the information landscape and how much that is changing. There are so many facets to finding resources and information. To have somebody who's in a role to facilitate access to those things and try and bring that information and those resources to people I think is a real-time saver for teachers and an important thing that libraries do.

4. Are there any current issues or challenges facing your library and how are you working to overcome them?

Given COVID, with people at home and students not so much on campus, the sense of community has fallen away a bit. There is more of a disconnection between staff, students and student cohorts and so a lot of the challenges that we face are about how we rebuild those relationships and how we foster the connections back to school.

We are also a growing school. When I first started at Uni High in 2012 we had I think just over 1,200 students, now we're much closer to 1,800. So that's just massive growth in quite a short period of time. Having a lot more students has meant employing lots more staff, so there can be a growing sense of alienation, especially due to COVID and the way that people can't come together and connect as a community. We're trying to respond to that period of instability and rebuild those relationships with staff as a library team. It's really important for us to reorient staff into what the library can provide.

5. How do you promote reading and literacy in your school and are there any challenges in doing so?

This is a big one. There are particular programs that we have in our school to really promote reading and literacy. We have a wide reading program for all students from Year 7 to 10. So Year 7 students will come to the library once a week as part of scheduled English sessions for about 50 minutes in the library to browse the collection and choose something that they want to read independently.

Because we have a team of teacher librarians, we're able to incorporate lots of other activities and things into that time, for example, we often do book presentations. It might be on something that we know they're learning about in in one of their other classes or in their English class or maybe thematic reading. We might share new books that we just got in or we might have a look at what they've been reading previously and then provide comparative reading recommendations. We support teachers to set up literature circles with

Collaborative work spaces, study booths and tutoring rooms at the University High School Library

those classes and get them doing small book clubs.

One of the big things that we have been really trying to focus on this year is scheduled one-on-one reader advisory conversations with students. We're calling them book chats and those are opportunities for us to get to know the students because we're really trying to rebuild our relationships with students after lockdowns, just checking in with them about how they feel about reading, to give us a better idea of who we're seeking to support. That's something that's meaningful for them and it's different from student to student.

As part of the design of the new library space, we included some spaces for things like tutoring or one-to-one small group support and intervention. We have a lot of the literacy specialists working out of these small spaces in the library. Providing that space then means that those specialists are coming down to the library. They're having more conversations with library staff, which creates more opportunities for us to work together.

6. So how do you promote interest in STEM areas in your school and are there any challenges in doing so?

I think that's something that we could do more of. There are things that we're doing, but it's definitely something that I've been thinking about. So what we do at the moment is that we have a pretty good relationship with the Elizabeth Blackburn Science School by supporting the Extended Investigations subject that runs through that school and we do workshops, assist with the oral assessment, and support inquiry

learning as part of their ongoing project. We also aim to resource those STEM subjects through our provisioning of digital resources and databases.

There are also things like the student-run coding club/game development club who use one of the library spaces to meet up every week. We try and facilitate that and support them with anything that they might need.

7. How do you encourage students to make use of the library?

We're really lucky to have a beautiful new space. Our library was recently renovated which helps promote the use of the library and its services. There was lots of consultation and feedback from students on the initial designs, and then as the project was evolving about what they would want to see for the new space. So we have these spaces that are purpose-built to respond to the needs and the interests of our students and that's made a big difference, and we're now able to host a variety of student clubs and activities as a result.

We have a pretty extensive orientation program for students and our wide reading program really facilitates that for us. It provides opportunities to come into classes and talk to them about who we are, what we do, the programs we run and the services we provide, and then also chat with students one-on-one so that they get to know us personally. Then we also take lots of opportunities as students move up through the years into the senior year levels and their library needs evolve to try and reiterate those services and programs that they might not have been so interested in previously.

8. What's your favourite thing about SCIS?

Connections is my favourite thing about SCIS. It has been really important for me, it's helped me see what other school libraries are doing. One of the big projects that we were undertaking when I first started in the library was the genrefication of our fiction collection. I read everything that I could about that process and what the experience was from other school libraries.

Same goes for the design of the new library. To read about library spaces, what they offer the and what the programs are that other schools are doing really informed our designs, and it also was really helpful for me because it informed my discussions and feedback to the architects who were involved in that process.

Stephanie Ward
Head of Library and Research
The University High School,
Melbourne

Stephanie Ward is the Head of Library and Research at The University High School, a co-educational, government-funded high school located in Parkville, Melbourne, which caters to around 1,700 students in years 7 to 12. Formerly a teacher of Literacy, English and English Language at Uni High, Stephanie completed the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) at Charles Sturt University from 2019 to 2021, and has been working her dream job in the school library for the past four years.